

Frequently Asked Questions About *No Child Left Behind and Highly Qualified Teachers*

The following are common questions about NCLB, specifically as the law applies to teachers and how the law impacts them as they serve in our schools. Their responses define and detail what is meant by the term “highly qualified” teachers. Responses have been adapted from *No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers*, U.S. Department of Education (2003).

1) Why is teacher quality such an important issue?

A major objective of *No Child Left Behind* is to ensure highly qualified teachers for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity or income, because a well-prepared teacher is vitally important to a child’s education. Research demonstrates the clear correlation between student achievement and teacher quality (Whitehurst, 2002).¹ Studies also show that many classrooms and schools, particularly those with economically disadvantaged students, have a disproportionate number of teachers who teach out of field or are not highly qualified (Ingresoll, R., 2002).²

2) According to *No Child Left Behind*, which teachers are required to demonstrate being “highly qualified”?

Any public school teacher, elementary or secondary, who teaches a core academic subject: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, history, civics and government, economics, geography, the arts, and foreign language, must be highly qualified.

3) What are the deadlines for meeting the “highly qualified” teacher requirements?

Beginning with the 2002-03 school year, teachers of core academic subjects newly hired to teach in Title I programs or schools must meet all requirements. By the end of the 2005-06 school year, all teachers of core academic subjects must meet all requirements in states that receive Title I funds.

4) What are the basic requirements in the federal law for “highly qualified” teachers?

The law requires that teachers meet these three basic requirements:

- Hold a bachelor’s degree,
- Obtain full state certification, and
- Demonstrate subject matter competency in core academic subjects the teacher teaches.

5) What is full certification in Rhode Island?

In Rhode Island, full certification for “highly qualified” teachers means they hold:

- Certificate of Eligibility for Employment,
- Professional certification, or
- Life professional certification.

6) How do I become “highly qualified” if I am a new teacher?

The law requires that new teachers must hold a bachelor's degree, full state certification, and demonstrate subject-matter competency. They can do this by passing a rigorous subject test in each of the academic subjects they teach. Middle or high school teachers may demonstrate subject matter competency by having successfully completed, in each of the core academic subjects taught, an academic major or coursework equivalent of 30 credits, a graduate degree, or National Board Certification. New elementary and early childhood teachers may demonstrate the required competency **only** by passing the state test.

7) Which standardized tests can new elementary and early childhood teachers use to demonstrate they are “highly qualified”?

In 2004, new elementary teachers can demonstrate the required competency only by passing two **PRAXIS II Elementary Tests required in Rhode Island. These tests are the 10014 Elementary Content Knowledge Test and the 20012 Elementary Content Area Exercises.**

8) How do I become “highly qualified” if I am an experienced teacher?

Experienced teachers must meet all three basic requirements by the end of the 2005-06 school year: To be “highly qualified”, teachers:

- must have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education;
- hold a Rhode Island provisional, professional, or life professional teaching certificate; and
- demonstrate subject matter competency in the core academic subject that is the current teaching assignment.

For the third requirement, there are multiple ways for experienced teachers to demonstrate subject area competency. Teachers may opt for taking a subject matter test or demonstrate competency through the state system of “high, objective, uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE).” In addition, middle and high school teachers may demonstrate competency if they have a major (or 30 credits), a graduate degree in the content they teach, National Board Certification in the content area of the teaching assignment, or a passing score in a rigorous content examination identified by RIDE.

9) What is the “high, objective, uniform state system of evaluation” (HOUSSE)?

HOUSSE is the system by which RI Department of Education can determine that an experienced teacher meets the subject matter competency requirements in the law. NCLB sets criteria for the state to follow when it designs this system for experienced teachers. The criteria:

1. Are set for grade-appropriate academic content knowledge and teaching skills.
2. Are aligned with challenging academic content and student achievement standards and developed consultation with core content specialists, teacher, and school administrators.
3. Provide objective, coherent information about the teacher's attainment of core content knowledge in the academic subjects he or she teaches.
4. Are applied uniformly to all teachers in the same academic subject and same grade level.
5. Take into consideration the time (up to 12 years total) a teacher has been teaching the academic subject.
6. Give credit for content specific professional experiences.

10) How does a veteran teacher demonstrate that he or she is “highly qualified” under Option 1 of HOUSSE?

The teacher demonstrates that he or she meets ONE of the following criteria:

- Holds an academic major or 30 credits in the content area of each teaching assignment.
- Holds a graduate degree in the content area of the teaching assignment
- Holds National Board Professional Certification in the content area.
- Has passed a rigorous content examination identified by RIDE as acceptable for the teaching assignment.

11) How do veteran teachers demonstrate they are “highly qualified” under Option 2?

The teacher completes the Rhode Island HOUSSE Content Rubric which assigns points for experience and professional development activities that focus on content area expertise and verify that the teacher:

- can achieve at least 100 points across the five categories on the rubric; and
- demonstrates experiences through at least three of the five areas.

12) Do “highly qualified” teacher requirements apply to special education teachers?

Yes. Special education teachers who are the teachers of record must be “highly qualified” in the content area they teach. However, special educators who are not the teacher of record and who provide consultation to teachers of core academic subjects by adapting curricula or in selecting appropriate teaching strategies/accommodations do NOT need to meet the “highly qualified” requirements.

13) What does it mean to be the “teacher of record”?

The teacher of record is the teacher responsible for content instruction and determining student grades.

14) Do the “highly qualified” teacher requirements apply to teachers of English language learners?

Yes, if teachers of English language learners are the teachers of record for core academic subjects, they must meet the requirement for “highly qualified” teachers. Additionally, teachers of English language learners who teach in instructional programs funded under Title III must be fluent in English and any other language in which they provide instruction, including written and oral communication skills.

15) Do charter school teachers need to be “highly qualified”?

Yes. Charter school teachers who teach core academic subjects are covered by the requirements for “highly qualified” teachers, and must comply with any provision in RI’s charter school law regarding certification.

16) Do long- and short-term substitute teachers need to meet the highly qualified requirements?

Short-term substitute teachers do not need to meet the “highly qualified” requirements. However, it is strongly recommended that long-term substitute teachers do meet the requirement.

17) Can teachers who are “highly qualified” to teach one subject area teach additional subjects, and still be considered “highly qualified”, if they have an emergency certificate to teach those subjects?

No. Teachers must have full state certification and must demonstrate they are ‘highly qualified’ for each core academic subject he or she teaches.

18) For the purposes of demonstrating subject matter competency for teachers in the middle grades, does a middle school teacher follow the designated guidelines for elementary or secondary teachers?

If the course content is “elementary or middle school level”, the teacher is “highly qualified” by satisfying the content standard for elementary teachers, using Option 1 or Option 2 of HOUSSE.

If the course content of the teaching assignment is “secondary”, the teacher the teacher is “highly qualified” only by satisfying the content standards for secondary teachers, using Option 1 or Option 2 of HOUSSE.

19) Which standardized tests can elementary and early childhood teachers use to demonstrate they are “highly qualified”?

In 2004, new elementary/early childhood teachers can demonstrate the required competency only by passing the **PRAXIS II 10014: Elementary Content Knowledge Test** and **PRAXIS 20012: Elementary Content Area Exercises**.

Veteran elementary and early childhood teachers certified between 2000 and 2003 need to pass both the **PLT (Principles of Teaching and Learning K-6)** and the **PRAXIS II #10014(Content Knowledge)**.

Veteran elementary and early childhood teachers initially certified from 1987 to 2000 need to have passed the **Core Battery of the NTE (National Teaching Exam)**.

Additional questions posted since November 1, 2003:

20) Do special education teachers in private education facilities receiving federal/state funding need to meet the federal definition of a “highly qualified” teacher? (11/03)

No, special education teachers in private education facilities that receive federal/state funding do not need to meet the requirements of “highly qualified” teachers.

21) Do special education teachers delivering instruction in public schools through a regional collaborative need to meet the federal definition of a “highly qualified” teacher? (11/03)

Yes, special education teachers delivering instruction in public schools through a regional collaborative need to meet the definition of “highly qualified” when they are assigned to teach any of the core academic subjects.

22) Do Title I teachers who provide supplemental instruction to students need to meet the federal definition of “highly qualified”? (Revised 4/28/04)

Yes, according to SEC.1119 Of Title I Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act, each local educational agency receiving assistance under Title I Part A shall ensure that all teachers hired after the first day of the 2002-2004 school year—and those hired subsequent to that date—and teaching in a program supported with Title I funds are “highly qualified”. Furthermore, to meet the federal definition, each local educational agency receiving Title I funds shall require that the principal of each Title I participating school attest annually in writing as to whether such school is in compliance with the requirements of this section, retain such documentation at the school and district level and make the attestations available to members of the public upon request.

23) Do summer school teachers need to be “highly qualified”? (12/03)

Yes, if summer school teachers teach core subjects, they need to be “highly qualified” for their teaching assignment.

24) Do teachers working in after school programs need to be “highly qualified”? (12/03)

If teachers are teaching core subjects in an extended school activity program, they do need to be “highly qualified”.

If teachers are working in extended day programs that are for enrichment, they do not need to be “highly qualified”.

25) Can teachers earn points for service on the HOUSSE Rubric for years of substitute teaching if they have worked the required 135 days? (12/03)

Yes, 135 days of substitute teaching experience is equivalent to a year’s teaching experience on the HOUSSE Rubric.

26) If teachers have been designated “highly qualified” in other school districts or states for the same teaching assignment, are those teachers “highly qualified” in Rhode Island for the same teaching assignment? (12/03)

Yes, teachers deemed “highly qualified” by other RI school districts or by other states can be considered “highly qualified” in Rhode Island when they provide documentation from the prior school district that they meet the subject matter competency for the same teaching assignment.

27) What is the process of appeal in determining teachers’ “highly qualified” status? (1/04)

Teachers may appeal decisions in determining their status as “highly qualified” for their teaching assignment by filing a request for appeal with their school principal, district superintendent, school committee, and then the RI Department of Education, sequentially.

28) How may teachers obtain a copy of their NTE scores? (1/04)

NTE scores may be held in teachers’ personnel files in at the district business offices. Also, NTE scores may be in teacher certification files at the RI Department of Education; teachers may request scores by mail or in person with appropriate identification.

29. How do elementary science itinerant teachers qualify using the HOUSSE rubric?

Elementary teachers who teach science only can demonstrate they are "Highly Qualified" by using the Elementary Option #2 HOUSSE Rubric and listing the teaching assignment as elementary science only. Teachers then would complete at least 3 columns of the rubric for the science teaching assignment and demonstrate a minimum of 17 points.

Elementary teachers of the other three core subjects would need to demonstrate at least 33 points in Language Arts, 33 in math, and 17 in social studies, for a minimum total of 83 across at least 3 of the columns.

30. Which HOUSSE Rubric does a secondary special education intensive resource teacher follow to demonstrate he/she is "Highly Qualified"?

The secondary special education intensive resource teacher follows the HOUSSE Rubric that matches the level of instruction, elementary or secondary, for whatever core academic subjects are being taught.

31. How do we determine whether the course content for a secondary special education intensive teacher is elementary or secondary?

The level of instruction, elementary or secondary, for the core academic subjects taught by special educators, is determined by the District School Committee and Administration.

32. Which HOUSSE Rubric does a severe/profound self-contained secondary teacher follow to verify if he/she is "Highly Qualified"? How do we determine whether the course content for a severe/profound self-contained class is elementary or secondary?

The secondary teacher of a severe/profound self-contained class would follow the Rubric appropriate to the class level of instruction, and usually a severe/profound self-contained class would be at an elementary level of instruction. However, the District School Committee and Administration determines what is considered the appropriate level of instruction for any given teaching assignment.

33. Under which circumstances, if any, does an elementary teacher have to re-verify that he/she is "Highly Qualified"? Must teachers demonstrate again that they are "Highly Qualified" if they transfer to another elementary school in the district, or if they change grade levels?

Once an elementary teacher demonstrates being "Highly Qualified" for an elementary teaching assignment, the teacher does not need to verify being "Highly Qualified" again as long as he/she stays, in a similar elementary teaching position.

34. Is the two-year Special Professional certificate considered FULL certification for purposes of being "highly qualified"?

Yes. It is considered an appeal certificate for renewal and is considered FULL certification for purposes of being "highly qualified".

ENDNOTES

¹ Whitehurst, G. (2002). *Research on Teacher Preparation and Professional Development*. Washington,DC: White House Conference on Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers.

² Ingersoll, R. (January, 2002) *Out of Field Teaching, Educational Inequality, and the Organization of Schools: An Exploratory Analysis*. University of Washington center for Study of Teaching and Policy.